Aristasia Treasure Trove

Jenilow, the Castle and the Hover-Train Wednesday, May 28 2008

Aristasian Geography and Aristasian Historyaristasia11:58 pm

Jenilow is the major Arcadian city in the southern "panhandle" of that country. The city proper has a population of 821,350 (3326 est.) and boasts the historic Abileschen castle downtown. The city is laid out as though its streets form a giant wheel, with the castle at its centre. Jenilow is known for its festive procession in Maia, as well as for its textile and ceramic industries.

Jenilovian culture is distinct both from that of Upper Arcadia and from that of the surrounding nations. It has a curious technics – advanced almost to Novarian standards and yet highly Arcadian in style. It is also more Estrenne in feeling than most of Novaria (which is itself quite "Estrenne", especially in the East of the country).

Those familiar with Jenilow say that certain pictures of Meiji era Japan are the closest Tellurian images to convey the cultural atmosphere of Jenilow. Obviously the comparison is only indicative and does not go beyond the visual impression, but it is still useful.

The current Mayor of Jenilow is Lady Maylana Rosemont. The Mayor, of course, administers the City of Jenilow and the Countess the County of Jenilow, of which the City is the County Town. Jenilow City is also the capital of the Archduchy of Jenilow, a huge "nation within a nation" that occupies most of the so-called "Jenilow peninsula" (it is not a true peninsula, of course, because it is surrounded not by water but by two non-Arcadian nations).

Jenilow Castle was originally the primary seat of the Archduchess of Jenilow – which it still is: it has long also been a triple seat of government, for it houses the council-chamber of the Countess of Jenilow and the chambers of the Mayor of Jenilow. All three dignitaries have extensive living quarters in the great building.

Castles were first built in early Imperial times. They were essentially fortified palaces, usually surrounded by large fortified enclosures. In those days the Outlander hordes still occasionally made incursions into the Eastern and Northern lands. One must also remember that certain classes of demon took on a far more physical form than has usually been the case in Telluria (the Great Demon in the Paper Peonies story is typical of this – and there were also demon armies).

The castle and its walled enclosure was a place where the puhrani (citizens) could retreat and be safe when danger threatened. Some cities were also walled for the same reason.

In later times and further west, the castle style of architecture, with turrets and other fortification-style features (in a more western style) was often adopted, for it had become a symbol of the Great Central Enclosure. On certain occasions the fortification could still provide a refuge against dark incursions, though its function was now largely symbolic.

Jenilow is 42 minutes by rail from Ladyton. The direct land-journey from Jenilow to Ladyton takes place almost entirely on Novarian soil and is not far short of a thousand miles (some suggest it may be more like 500 miles – distances are notoriously difficult to calculate between worlds). Clearly such a distance by train in such a time would be impossible anywhere in Arcadia (even including the Jenilow "peninsula" which is more technically advanced than the rest of that realm). However, the journey connects with the Royal Novarian Golden Arrow Line "super-bullet-express" which connects Southern Novaria with Ladyton and Novarayapurh.

These "super-bullet trains" are the only supersonic land-craft currently used in the Empire. Such speeds are considered unsafe for other land vehicles. The super-bullets are regarded as land-craft, although they are actually hover-trains and do not touch the ground while in operation. The "rails" are in fact force-guides rather than physical rails. At the speed they travel, the friction involved in wheeled locomotion would be unmanageable.

Leave a Response »

Novaria Friday, Apr 11 2008

Aristasian Geographyaristasia7:56 pm

Novaria is a very beautiful southern nation. Her southern coastline is on the Bay of Doves and in the north the mighty river Thamëaut runs through her on its way to Trent. There are many beautiful lakes such as the great Ushasti.

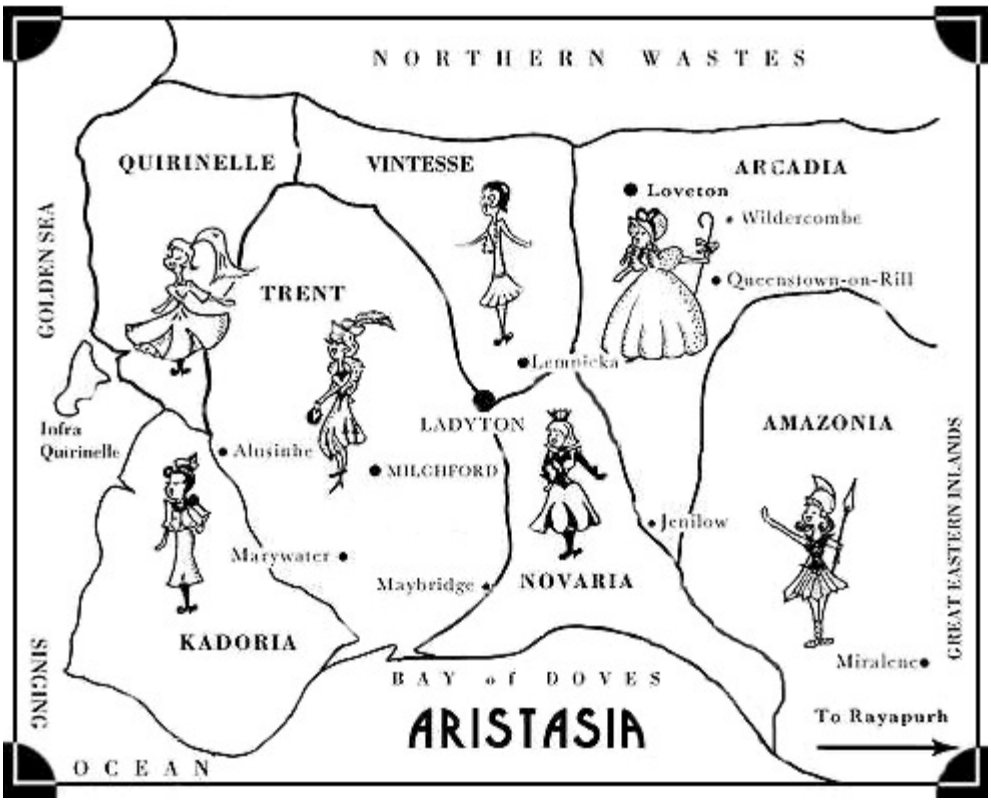
Two languages are spoken in Novaria: Westrenne (which is very like our English) and Raihiralan Cairenne. Most Westrenne-speaking Novarians speak with a Raihiralan accent even if they do not speak Raihiralan. The nation has very strong ancestral ties with the East, and in many ways is the most traditional of the Western nations. It is also, however, by far the most technically advanced. One will find there many things from family skyjets to personal force-fields ('auries') with temperature control, allowing blondes to walk abroad even in the harsh mountain winters in light and fashionable clothes from the south.

Novarian towns include Novarayapurh or Nevrayapurh (New Rayapurh), the capital, and Westeringsea, across the river from Goldhaven, on the Trent border. Ladyton, the capital of the Celestial Empire, is situated at the intersection of Trent, Vintesse and Novaria.

3 Responses »

Aristasian Geography: Beyond the Map Tuesday, Jun 19 2007

Aristasian Geographyaristasia9:36 pm



This little map shows only the West and hither-East of the Motherland. Its precise accuracy is to be doubted and it should be looked on rather like one of those mediaeval maps that have everything in more or less the right place but are often inaccurate as to precise shapes, sizes and details.

To the North of the map, the land is known to be very inhospitable. Millennia ago dark creatures lurked there and a few may still be there. The Queen of Kadoria was long ago entrusted with the task of maintaining North-Western security, and there is a narrow zone inside the Northern Wastelands, above Quirinelle and Vintesse, maintained by the Kadorian Army with patrols from other national forces. Further east, the borderlands are kept by the Arkadyani. Further east still there is a Great Wall built long ago. This is still kept by companies of archers and there are cavalry posts along the way in case of need. Nowadays these installations (both east and West) serve the function mostly of training camps, teaching the arts of survival and combat in rough country.

Eastward, in the North, the distinction between Arcadia and "Amazonia" becomes less clear. The true Arcadia is a land of reduced technics by Westrenne standards but is a Northern technical enclave in the East. Trains run regularly, the streets of the towns are gas-lit and the postal service (not strictly technical, but always remarked upon as part of the Arcadian passion for organisation) is legendary. In most of the great cities, one can post a letter the in morning, inviting someone to tea that same day, and receive a reply by lunch time.

Because of the non-forceful and somewhat "ritual" nature of Aristasian government, the Eastern boundaries of Arcadia have never been entirely clear, with certain Eastern princesses declaring themselves under the protection of Her Majesty Arkadyana for some purposes and not for others. But a thousand miles after the railway has been replaced by the stage-coach, where the stage itself has become intermittent and the mails are irregular, Arcadia may be said to have more-or-less ended and the government of the local royalty is far more important than any contact with the distant Arkadyani throne. Even here, though, you will find the odd enclave of West Arcadians running schools or trading companies or simply living there from choice, still living in West Arcadian style and dressing for dinner in the formal clothes of High Arcadia.

"Amazonia" as you will no doubt be aware, is not really a nation. It has no single Queen, though the far-Western Area (that shown on the map and a bit beyond) has rulers firmly loyal to the Westrenne Empress (whom they regard as Raihiranya Orvilanhela – the Empress of the World). As with Arcadia, things become less clear-cut as we move eastwards and eventually the border between "Amazonia" and Arcadia disappears as other forms of jurisdiction become more prominent.

We do not know as much about the East as we do about the West. Even in Sai Herthe itself, with the lack of modern communications in the East, it is not always easy to distinguish "hard fact" from "travellers' tales" – and of course there is less anxiety to do so than there would be in Telluria. Facts are as important for what they have to tell us as they are for their correspondence to the material surfaces of things.

But here are some things we do know: Some way east and south of our map is Rayapurh (Sun-City). Rayapurh was the last of the great Eastern successors to the Cairen (or Caeren) Empire. Rayapurh retains much of its old glory and the question of whether the Empress at Rayapurh is Raihiranya Orvilanhela or whether that title has now passed to the Empress in the West is one that may never be satisfactorily settled. There is a recognition in the East that these latter days are the Time of the Setting Sun (that is, of the West). There are some that call the Empress at Rayapurh the Little Empress of the South and some who hold that she is the true Spiritual Sun of the world.

Incidentally, the Capital of Novaria is called Novarayapurh, and (since Raya also means "Lady") the name of the Westrenne Imperial Capital, Ladyton, is a translation of Rayapurh.

East of Rayapurh we find many nations and principalities; some former Heiress-Empires of Caere, some continuing to claim Imperial glory in one degree or another; we find different races and peoples like the white-skinned Alvitsenhe (not pinkish-skinned like the Westrennes, but very white and almond-eyed); the great snow-capped mountain ranges, and beyond them Caere itself, its towers still standing but with no claimant to the Imperial Throne. The Chamber of the Empress is kept in its beautiful state, but the High Princess of Caere never uses it. There is no question that the seat of the Mayaraihiranya moved west long ago (that is, long before the time of present Westrenne Empire). Caere is still a great centre, perhaps the great centre of culture in the nether-East.

There are lands beyond Caere, and then the great and small islands of the Estrenne Sea.

To the West of our map it has long been held that the Isles of the Blessed lie and the Jewelled Paradise of the Daughter. It has been considered impious to sail very far beyond the Westrenne shores. Probably one could in fact circumnavigate the globe, and no doubt this prohibition constitutes something of a confusion of Sacred Geography with material geography and is one of the few really "pre-modern" ideas to continue to prevail in the West.

There may, however, be a profound reason for this. The reader cannot by now be unaware that East and West have a symbolic (and therefore ritual) significance beyond their merely spatial reference (or rather because of it, for even the ignorant never cease in reality to move in sacred space). The opening of the "West beyond the West" in Telluria has gone hand in hand with the Rationalist Revolution, and it may be that one is the geographical equivalent and ritual enactment of the other.

However that may be, the further reaches of the Golden Sea are held to be sacred and inviolable, and of the very few who have ever sailed thither, none has returned to tell the tale – nor ever set out with the intention of returning.

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